

DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation to host public meeting on proposed changes in surf fishing program

DOVER – DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation will discuss proposed changes to the surf fishing program at its upcoming, regularly-scheduled Parks and Recreation Council meeting. The meeting, open to the public, is scheduled for 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Jan. 17th, at the Dover Public Library, 35 East Loockerman Street, Dover 19901.

Parks & Recreation staff will offer a presentation on proposed surf fishing permit fee increases, and the public will be given the opportunity to comment. The proposed fee increase, if approved at the council's Jan.17 meeting, would go into effect on Feb.1.

DNREC's Division of Parks & Recreation is proposing raising the surf fishing permit fees to \$90 for Delaware residents, an increase of \$10. Out-of-state residents would pay \$180 for the annual surf fishing permit, an increase of \$20. Surf-fishing permit holders would continue to receive the additional benefit of their permit serving as an annual pass, providing free access to all 17 of Delaware's state parks.

The Division of Parks & Recreation is also proposing limiting the number of surf fishing permits issued to 17,000 annually. In 2017, the state issued 17,104 permits. The fee increase is being proposed to help ensure the public's safety, and to maintain the quality user experience at designated multi-use beaches. The beaches have a capacity, and the Division of Parks & Recreation seeks to limit the number of permits issued to assist in continuing to manage the surf fishing program.

The priority is to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience for all visitors. A limit on the number of permits issued would help ease future congestion on all multi-use beaches.

Delaware's state park system is primarily self-funded. Sixty-five percent of the funds used to operate and maintain the parks come from the collection of user fees. Revenue generated by the proposed fee increase would advance the Division's efforts to improve amenities, and increase the presence of park enforcement at ocean parks.

The authority to increase park user fees is included in Section 87 of the FY 2019 bond bill, and requires "adequate opportunity for public comment and approval of the appropriate public advisory council." The Parks and Recreation Council is an 11-member board appointed by the Governor, that serves in an advisory capacity to the Division of Parks & Recreation.

The public can submit written comments in advance on the Division of Parks & Recreation's web page at www.destateparks.com/FeeProposal. Written comments can also be sent to: Greg J. Abbott, Attn.: Surf-fishing permit fee proposal, DNREC Division of Parks & Recreation, 89 Kings Highway, Dover, DE 19901 prior to the Jan. 17 meeting. More information is also available at <https://publicmeetings.delaware.gov/Meeting/61600>.

Contact: Beth Shockley, DNREC Public Affairs, 302-739-9902

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